

Extension of Range of the Eastern Grey Kangaroo, *Macropus giganteus*, in Victoria

BY G. M. COULSON AND C. HUTCHINSON¹

Identification and Distribution

Both the Eastern Grey Kangaroo, *Macropus giganteus*, and the Western Grey Kangaroo, *M. fuliginosus*, occur in Victoria, but data on the distribution of the two species are inadequate. The species are morphologically similar and were first distinguished by Kirsch and Poole (1972) on the basis of reproductive parameters and serum protein polymorphisms. However, with experience they can be reliably distinguished in the field by coat colour: silver-grey to brown in the Eastern Grey Kangaroo; darker brown (never grey) with very dark forehead and ears in the Western Grey Kangaroo.

Following the taxonomic separation of the two species there were difficulties in identifying grey kangaroos sighted in the field, and faunal surveys tended to pool all sightings of grey kangaroos (e.g. Hampton *et al.*, 1982). The distribution of the two species in south-eastern Australia, based on examination of museum specimens (Poole 1977) suggested that there was a narrow zone of sympatry in Victoria (Fig. 1). Extensions of range have since been recorded in New South Wales and Victoria (Fig. 1).

Extension of Range

This paper reports a westward extension of range of some 50 km of the Eastern Grey Kangaroo in Victoria. A large adult male was shot in July 1982 about 27 km north of Rainbow in north-western Victoria within a few metres of the 142nd Meridian (35°40'S, 142°00'E) (Fig. 1). Its smaller but similarly-coloured companion escaped. The skull was lodged with the National Museum

of Victoria (Registration No. C25769) and the skin was forwarded to CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research where the identification was confirmed as *M. giganteus*. The tanned skin has been retained by C. Hutchinson.

The specimen was collected on private land near Lake Werrebean, between Wyperfeld National Park to the north and abutting Albacutya Regional Park to the south. The predominant landforms in the area are level lakebeds and stable sandrises with interdune swales. River red gum, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, and Black box, *E. largiflorens*, form a woodland or open forest in the swales which are occasionally inundated by floodwaters; pure stands of river red gum fringe the larger lakebeds. The lakebeds support native and introduced grasses and a dense growth of burr medic, *Medicago polymorpha*, which appears to be an important food source for local kangaroos. The dominant vegetation of the sandy rises include slender cypress pine, *Callitris preissii*, scrub pine, *C. verrucosa*, buloke, *Casuarina lehmannii*, sugarwood, *Myoporum platycarpum*, yellow mallee, *E. incrassata*, red mallee, *E. foecunda*, and Quorn mallee, *E. porosa*. These species form an open forest or open shrubland with a very sparse ground cover.

The property supports a substantial population of Western Grey Kangaroos, which are also common in the nearby Wyperfeld National Park, and was typical, before clearing, of much of the range of the Western Grey Kangaroo in Victoria. It is possible that the presence of Eastern Grey Kangaroos in this area reflects movement in response to the then prevailing drought conditions. However, emigration from populations

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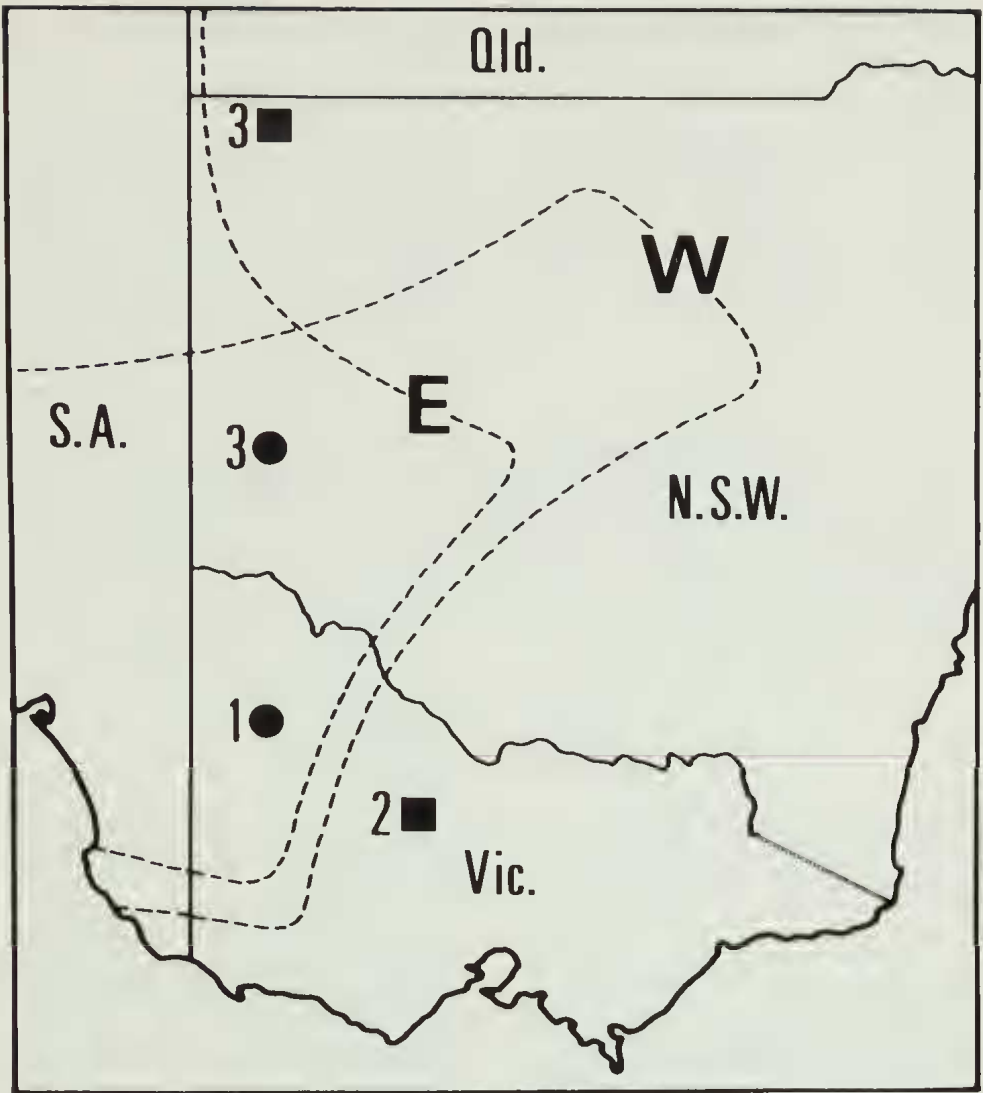


Fig. 1. Extensions of range of *M. giganteus* (circles) and *M. fuliginosus* (squares) reported by: 1 (this paper), 2 (Conlon, 1980), 3 (Shepherd, 1982). Broken lines show the presumed western limit of *M. giganteus* (E) and eastern limit of *M. fuliginosus* (W), after Poole (1977).

in more mesic environments to the south or east appears unlikely. It is more probable that Eastern Grey Kangaroos have long been present in the Wyperfeld area in much lower densities than Western Grey Kangaroos, as in Kinchega National Park (Shepherd 1982), and have not hitherto been recognised.

Acknowledgements

Bill Poole (CSIRO) confirmed the identification, and Linda Huxley (NMV) allowed access to the specimen. Angus Martin helpfully criticised the manuscript which was typed by Lyn Ramsay. The specimen was shot under a pest destruction permit from the Fisheries and Wildlife Division.

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Observation of Manna

By T. SAULI*

Observations of the association of scale insects (Coccidae spp.) and ants in the manufacture and use of manna is always of interest and is well documented in books of insects. My most recent observation of this remarkable association was at Blackburn where a manna gum was covered with scale insects, manna and ants. It appears that in most cases the supply and demand are fairly equal, as only small amounts of manna can be seen because of the constant removal by ants. However, as a boy I can recall making several visits to a stand of manna gums above Snobs Creek Falls (near Eildon) where at times I could pick up pieces of manna the size of "pop-corn" scattered all over the ground beneath these gums. I did not know of this insect association then, but it has occurred to me since that perhaps as these gums were very tall, the ants may not have been able to reach the tips of the branches, or there may not have been enough ants in the area, hence sup-

ply exceeding demand and the manna was able to build up and be blown off by the wind.

I often wonder about the source of the manna referred to in the "scriptures". Dr Leach, in his book on "Nature Studies", tells us that the possible source of this manna is a species of lichen that grows in the Holy Lands, but he does not say whether this lichen has a tree or a rock for a host. The Middle East today is practically treeless, but history records that it was not always so. Alexander the Great was just one of the conquerors who desecrated the forests there, so it can be assumed that manna could have been produced in the Biblical lands in the same way as that produced above Snobs Creek Falls and not "sent from heaven" as written, although no doubt this is only a literary appreciation. The stands of manna gums at Snobs Creek were thinned out during milling operations over 40 years ago and although I have been back many times since, I have not witnessed the event again. I wonder if other readers have had similar observations of manna production exceeding demand.

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